

# Pragati

The Indian  
National Interest  
Review

No 26 | May 2009

## Changing China

DEALING WITH A RISING NEIGHBOUR  
TALIBANISATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS  
BLACK MONEY AND TAX HAVENS  
HUMAN RIGHTS FRAUD  
UNDERSTANDING ENERGY WARS

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# Contents

## PERSPECTIVE

- 2 Missing: a strategic outlook**  
The need to restructure intellectual institutions  
*Raja Karthikeya Gundu*
- 3 Chasing the black money**  
Why lower taxes and campaign finance reform are necessary  
*Harsh Gupta*
- 5 Tampering with evidence**  
The unfortunate case against Teesta Setalvad  
*Rohit Pradhan*

## FILTER

- 7** Essential readings of the month  
*Ravi Gopalan*

## IN DEPTH

- 8 Cracks in party-army unity?**  
The gap between the CCP and PLA appears to be widening  
*D S Rajan*
- 10 Showing unhappiness**  
On a controversial new book on realism and nationalism  
*David Bandurski*

## ROUNDUP

- 14 Dealing with the rising power next door**  
Comments on two recent developments in India-China relations  
*Nitin Pai*
- 16 Taliban at the gate**  
Pakistanis are outraged, but the military holds the key  
*Ahsan Butt*
- 19 Middle-class saviour**  
The inevitable defeat of the Taliban  
*Mosharraf Zaidi*
- 22 Waiting for true federation**  
Baloch nationalism is not entirely incongruent with the idea of Pakistan  
*Umair Ahmed Muhajir*

## BOOKS

- 25 “It was always about oil, dear!”**  
Understanding conflicts over energy resources  
*T S Gopi Rethinaraj*

# Pragati

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## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Missing: a strategic outlook***The need to restructure intellectual institutions*

RAJA KARTHIKEYA GUNDU

THE STRENGTH and success of a nation's foreign policy is not merely a factor of its arsenal or its statecraft. It depends on the strategic outlook of its society as a whole. In recent decades, there has been a rapid decline in the quantity of strategic debate in India and as a result, an unpardonable loss of strategic outlook. Foreign policy has become more and more the fiefdom of a few.

The apathy in the foreign policy domain is wholly at odds with economic renaissance which has put India on the world stage. Unfortunately, the stature that India enjoyed in the world in the 1950s under Nehru, despite its levels of impoverishment and meagre diplomatic corps, was far greater than what we have now as one of the world's largest economies. The reasons are internal and go far deeper than governmental effort.

There is a general institutional distaste for and neglect of matters of international affairs. Beyond Pakistan, few foreign policy issues make it to the agenda of the Parliament or that when they are discussed, they are woefully lacking in nuance. Key initiatives in India's foreign policy such as the "Look East" policy or Afghanistan policy are formulated in a black box in South Block. This is not as much a critique of the policies themselves as it is of the processes that go into making those policies. Within the government itself, strategic communications is a non-existent function, with little co-ordination between various organs of the state. As was highlighted during the arrests made in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks, the Indian state was barely able to bring clarity through co-ordination, much less orchestrate effective information operations against those attacking the Indian state.

When it comes to academia, very few universities in India offer international relations in their curriculum, and barring Jawaharlal Nehru University, there are none that are remotely comparable in stature with global counterparts. The international relations curriculum in schools and colleges in general is almost entirely a history of international institutions like the non-aligned movement, and treaties like the non-proliferation treaty. The geopolitical realities of the post-Cold war era are given a brush over. The social sciences

curriculum in our schools is outdated and does not help students understand the events happening around them, be it the rise of China or be it the global financial crisis. Schools simply don't encourage the discussion of beyond-the-textbook events.

New Delhi lacks think-tanks that produce considered independent insights into foreign policy in practice, and the government gives scant attention to the output of those few think-tanks that exist. Given lack of adequate private sector support, most think-tanks have a parochial mandate and no one think-tank can give the government independent policy advice on the entire gamut of policy challenges.

**There is extremely inadequate collaboration between the businesses and the government despite the rapid expansion of India's economic interests across the globe.**

Diplomacy itself is not merely a function of the government, academics or think-tanks. Indian businesses have rapidly expanded their presence and their interests today are spread across the globe. Yet, there is extremely inadequate collaboration between the businesses and the government. Most Indian businessmen doing business abroad feel the government is incompetent in helping them, while the government views most of them as fly-by-night profiteers who care little about safeguarding "Brand India". These tensions ensure that diplomatic bonhomie seldom translates into economic benefit for India. For instance, a few years ago, when Libya opened up to international business, the Indian mission in Tripoli struggled to convince Indian firms to come in. The net result: valuable oil concessions were grabbed by Western and Chinese firms before we could blink.

Few Indian students go beyond the West for study, and even if they wanted to, there are barely

any scholarships or resources from government or private sector to do so. The average Indian lacks an adequate understanding of foreign cultures, norms and world-views, and satellite TV and Internet have not managed to change this. Hence, in the absence of global exposure, Indians continue to be an inward-looking nation burdened by prejudice.

Thus, it is no surprise that when Indians travel abroad for the first time in their mature years, they can be culturally inadapted and sometimes even mildly xenophobic.

To become a real power on the world stage, to build on the economic stature that it has achieved, India must seriously overhaul its strategic outlook. For instance, externally, the government should expand its public diplomacy initiative into one that consists of a young professional service corps (on the lines of the hugely successful Peace Corps of the United States), student exchange programs and mass media driven programs that permit greater flow of ideas and culture.

The tasks internal to the nation are much more daunting. Educational curriculum, particularly at the school level, needs to be thoroughly revised to mirror the current global scenario, and teaching of

foreign languages should be promoted. A public-private partnership to train and culturally sensitise employees of Indian firms doing business abroad (at least in some sectors vital to “Brand India”) must be started. The civil service should be reformed to permit entry of eligible professionals at all levels of the cadre. Government and the private sector must collaborate to nurture a vibrant think-tank scene, drawing from the best minds in the discipline. Civil servants—not just retired ones—should be encouraged to spend a year of their career in think-tanks and academics, both to gain fresh ideas and to impart knowledge of practical policy-making.

In short, a reinvention of India’s role and stature in the world will not come through diplomatic coups, regional muscle-flexing or wishful thinking. The resurrection of India’s strategic outlook can only begin with a structural reform of India’s intellectual and academic institutions.

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## GEOECONOMICS

# Chasing the black money

*Why lower taxes and campaign finance reform are necessary*

HARSH GUPTA

IN THE run-up to the Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has raised the issue of illegal wealth in Swiss banks and other tax havens—astutely combining its economic and national security planks. It has also alleged that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government is not very keen to get these funds back—insinuating corruption as the reason.

Unfortunately, both partisan and non-partisan reactions have focused on the quantum of money, not the fundamental incentives involved. Yet for money to reach the privacy-protecting banks of a country deemed to be a tax haven, it must first leave the originating country. Therefore the first responsibility of preventing illegal transfer of funds lies with the latter, not least because the transfer to be prevented has been deemed illegal there.

So if the originating country cannot trace the black money in its own backyard, then it must simplify tax laws and adopt electoral reforms to tackle the root of the problem. For example, if consumption taxes like Value Added Tax (VAT) or Goods and Services Tax (GST) are emphasised more than complicated direct taxes, a big loophole can be plugged. Concerns about the progressivity of taxes—the idea that those with higher incomes must pay a higher percentage of their income as tax—can be tackled by direct transfers to the poor. Also, trade policy needs reform: to stop under- and over-invoicing of trade overall tariffs must be reduced. Similarly, unrealistic caps on election expenditures by individual candidates should be scrapped because they encourage crony capitalism and corruption.

Photo: alex.ch



Also while the global economic crisis has converted financial privacy from a sacrosanct value to a sacrilegious one overnight, in many circumstances, the desire to keep financial affairs hidden from the authorities is still a reasonable one for many reasons. Avoiding over-taxation by a predatory state like pre-liberalisation India, or saving for a rainy day in an hyper-inflationary country like Zimbabwe, or to protect human rights lest a dictator's witch-hunt result in the seizure of domestic accounts.

Moreover, we must be careful of a slippery slope if we go about restricting the financial sovereignty of small countries—if today a cartel of influential nations can somehow force them to discard privacy laws, then can not the very same cartel of governments also force these small countries to “harmonise” taxes and adopt certain minimum tax rates? In fact this is the real undercurrent to the issue as far as the Germans, the French and the American Democrats are concerned. Faced with demographic contraction and ballooning welfare states, and unable to allow free immigration because of political considerations, Western leftists want to somehow prevent their rich citizens and corporations from leaving for the greener shares of lower taxes, instead of controlling their own expenditures. After all, many technocrats in the European Union and the United Nations have said so openly—and the latest financial crisis has at least strengthened the superficial pull of the argument that fiscal policies must be internationally co-ordinated.

But international tax competition is a very

healthy phenomenon, and tax harmonisation very dangerous. Tax competition forces countries to make the spending of federal governments more efficient. It is the efficiency of spending that is important, not quantity—therefore “race-to-bottom” descriptions of tax competition are wrong. If global taxes are constrained, then the Indian state will also be forced to become more efficient to continue to attract investment—and this will be a

**The difference between ‘tax havens’ and other relatively low-tax and high-privacy countries like the United States is often just the amount of power they wield.**

boon for its millions of poor citizens, if not for its *status quo* loving political elite.

Now undoubtedly, financial privacy and tax competition are technically two different issues. Tax havens could theoretically dump privacy and still stand at the vanguard of international tax competition—but will future populist urges for big spending in originating countries not conveniently demolish this nuance, once a punish-the-haven precedent has been set? Also, if sanctions and tariffs are allowed to be slapped against Switzerland because of this issue, would not “green” sanctions and tariffs against countries like India also gain legitimacy in the future?



Then how does one get past the impasse? The real distinction then should be on kind of money coming in to these havens. There are two potential reasons to secretly expatriate money—the money in question is “dirty money” (connected with crime and terrorism) or the money is legitimately earned—but where the earner wants to evade taxes. These two reasons should not get conflated if we are to maintain financial sovereignty and yet at the same time confront the very real threat of global liquidity at the disposal of terrorists.

This is a workable distinction. Financing terrorists anywhere in the world is a serious crime in most countries. On the other hand, not paying taxes in another country is not necessarily a crime in many countries. This principle of “dual criminality” therefore outlines a basic framework for a negotiated settlement between the “tax havens” and (say) other G-20 nations. Moreover, the potential infiltration of terrorists into the tax havens is highly unlikely—according to Chris Edwards and Daniel Mitchell, authors of *Global Tax Revolution* “[t]here are no longer any ‘non-cooperative’ jurisdictions, including any tax havens, on the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force—an international agency that monitors the fight against dirty money.”

Moreover, getting any money back quickly—if at all—is well nigh impossible. The money is in different havens, it has been moved around and probably consumed. At least some individual-specific documentation of suspicion would have to be provided. A lot of the money in these havens

is legitimate, like Mauritius-routed foreign institutional investment, and even if the havens all collectively somehow buckle who is to say that the black money from an Indian point of view would now not be with some *hawala* dealer in Dubai instead of in the secretive-but-still-largely-safe-from-terrorists Swiss accounts? Unintended consequences are, well, unintended and they can be very ugly indeed.

In any case, the biggest tax haven in the world happens to be the United States of America. No information collection takes place nor does taxation of interest or capital gains income of non-resident aliens take place there. Many other countries have differential tax and privacy policies—for their locals and for foreigners—even those which ostensibly follow “territorial taxation”. The difference between ‘tax havens’ and other relatively low-tax and high-privacy countries (like the United States) is often just the amount of power they wield.

India should be on the side of fiscal sovereignty, lower taxes and tariffs, and legalisation and transparency of money in politics. If it goes beyond proximate factors and gets these basic facets of governance right, it will not only stop wealth from leaving—but also create a lot more right at home.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

# Tampering with evidence

## *The unfortunate case against Teesta Setalvad*

ROHIT PRADHAN

WHO IS Teesta Setalvad? A tireless fighter for the unfortunate victims of 2002 Gujarat riots waging a relentless battle against an unsympathetic state and the laggardly criminal justice system or a publicity hungry ideologue cynically exploiting the riots for her personal aggrandisement? The answer, unfortunately, depends on whom you choose to trust.

Specific allegations of coaching witnesses and inventing tales of horrific violence have been levelled against Ms Setalvad in a *Times of India* report

purportedly quoting from a yet-to-be-made-public report filed by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the Supreme Court. Other media reports, quoting Ms Setalvad and anonymous SIT sources, have vehemently denied the allegations arguing that it is a ploy to divert attention from the real issue: justice for the victims of Gujarat riots. The SIT chief has only refused to confirm the allegations rather than outrightly rejecting them.

Whatever may be the truth the allegations raise some troubling questions over the conduct

of human right organisations, the national media and the intense politicisation of the criminal justice system.

In a debate on the role of human rights organisations in these pages ('Getting human rights right', *Pragati*, No 15 | June 2008), Salil Tripathi, responding to frequent criticism of the human rights movement as "context insensitive" had argued that such organisations "must remain unreasonable" otherwise "the moral sharpness of their message...is lost." It might be reasonable and indeed necessary to emphasise human rights. It could also persuasively be argued that India needs more human rights activism. Yet the pursuit of a single goal disregarding all else, including concern for due process and fairness, is fraught with danger. For it relies too much on inherent moral standing of those who have attached themselves to the cause of human rights virtually assuming that they are guided by no other consideration save for a deep belief in their cause. It is particularly worrisome because their message is ostensibly guided by a sense of moral uprightness—a claim human rights activists are quick to make and underlies their basic advantage vis-à-vis the state. And because the message is so inextricably linked with the credibility of the messenger, even the slightest blemish damages the worthy cause of human rights. Ms Setalvad's alleged improper behaviour falls squarely in this bracket as it strengthens the hands of her detractors, who, suspicious of Ms Setalvad and her ilk, become dismissive of human rights itself.

If allegations against her are even partially true, then Ms Setalvad's unconscionable conduct has severely damaged the cause of justice and human rights. Yet, many of Ms Setalvad's colleagues have jumped to her defence without bothering to wait for full facts to emerge. At least in this particular case, the "unreasonableness" seems more directed at protecting an individual rather than advancing the cause of human rights.

Second, the role of media has been very disappointing. It has pursued the Gujarat riots story at great lengths—considering the horrifying nature of the riots, that must be applauded—so it was surprising that the major television news channels and newspapers almost completely ignored the original allegations against Ms Setalvad. Elections can hardly be offered as an excuse since a subsequent Supreme Court order against the Gujarat government was widely covered in the media. Indeed, many of the media houses that had studiously refused comment on the allegations in the SIT report gave wide coverage to Ms Setalvad's defence and virtually blamed the Gujarat gov-

ernment for "leaking" the report. Ms Setalvad is a frequent guest on many television channels, and is treated as almost a "authority" on Gujarat riots—yet, the same channels had no questions for Ms Setalvad in this particular case. Neutral observers can hardly be blamed for concluding that many within the media who claim to fight for justice and secularism are perhaps motivated by less lofty considerations. The media's influence in polity is directly correlated with its credibility and it would do well to reflect on its conduct in this sorry episode.

Finally, that the investigation of Gujarat riots have to be supervised by the apex court is trou-

**Because the message is so inextricably linked with the credibility of the messenger, even the slightest blemish damages the worthy cause of human rights.**

bling enough—it is a strong indictment of the inability of the criminal justice system to act impartially in face of political pressure—but that even the highest court in the land was left advising the concerned parties not to indulge in mudslinging is worrying. The criminal justice system rests on witnesses telling the truth and it is for this reason that courts take a dim view of perjury. The allegations against Ms Setalvad would be classified as perjury by even its most liberal definition. The court's magnanimous gesture of not ordering a full investigation against Ms Setalvad is misplaced. In any case, the court could have shut down rumour-mongering and conspiracy theorists by the simple expedient of ordering the release of the full report. It is unfathomable why the apex court should embrace secrecy instead of encouraging openness and transparency. After all, India deserves to know of those individuals the SIT has indicted of inciting and leading one of her worse riots.

This unfortunate episode has damaged those institutions that are essential for the well being of the Indian republic. Restoring their credibility would require deep introspection and admittance of their fallibilities. If nothing else, they owe it to the unfortunate victims of Gujarat riots who still await justice at the hands of Indian state.

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## Essential readings of the month

RAVI GOPALAN

### ► Enhance PPP capabilities

In an op-ed in *DNA*, MUKUL ASHER welcomes the setting up of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) unit within the finance ministry. Further he notes that "it is essential to keep in mind that a PPP project incompetently structured and implemented, and with an inappropriate mindset, can be harmful for the country as a whole. The urgent challenge therefore is not to avoid PPP but to develop requisite competencies and mindset."

### ► Fuel supply challenges

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) scholar LEENA SRIVASTAVA provides an overview of the glaring lacunae in the way energy issues are tackled by the Indian government. In an opinion piece in *Financial Chronicle* ("India's energy conundrum") she laments the lack of accountability in energy administration that has led to the halving of the capacity expansion targets in the 11th five year plan from the original 80GW to 40GW by 2012. In addition, she cites the protracted wrangling between the ministries on gas pricing of the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin, causing an annualised loss of Rs 30,000 crore, due to the delay in the utilisation of 3.5 GW of capacity in gas-based power plants.

She also calls attention to the lack of progress on the allocation of coal blocks to the private sector and the non-transparent allotment process finalised by the coal ministry. She proposes that the PM's energy co-ordination committee have an executive

arm to ensure accountability and co-ordinated action on the newly minted integrated energy policy.

### ► China's diplomatic contempt of the EU

JOHN FOX and FRANCOIS GODEMENT of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) conduct a 'power audit' of EU-China relations and classify the 27 member bloc into ideological free-traders, assertive industrialists, accommodating mercantilists and European followers. In a policy report ("A Power Audit of EU-China Relations") they aver that the EU's current China strategy of unconditional engagement has been rendered obsolete by the rise of the middle kingdom's power, its skilful exploitation of European weakness and its refusal to become a democracy. They call for rethinking and 'retooling' the EU-China relationship.

They call for the EU to simultaneously engage Washington and Beijing to partner them on climate change, resolving the economic crisis, and nuclear non-proliferation among others and also to persuade Beijing that there would be a cost to ignoring the EU.

The authors also call for ratification of the Lisbon treaty and giving the EU a leader chosen by peers who could then help towards nudging China to be a better partner and global citizen.

### ► Defending Australia

In an op-ed in *The Australian* ("Bracing for the Asian century"), Lowy Institute's HUGH WHITE argues that Australia's

defence needs must be reassessed in the light of the shifting global balance of power and China's ascendancy.

The Rudd government has to decide on either advancing or regressing from its predecessor's white paper's ambitious objectives and then reshape the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to match the new set of objectives. He speculates that Indonesia and the South Pacific islands would command some interest although the strategic outlook would be dominated by developments in the wider Asia-Pacific.

Australia's decades-old operational doctrine of maritime denial would continue but that would require a redesign of forces to operate in tougher circumstances. The 'balanced force' inherited from the 70s would no longer cut it and defence planning would need to focus on advancing specific capabilities. These could mean expansion of infantry battalions, firepower and armoured divisions, a larger submarine fleet and expanded squadrons of aircraft such as joint strike fighter for robust air combat and strike capacity.

To achieve this, he calls for a hike in defence spending from the current 2% of GDP to 2.5% to build a focused force to deter military threats in the Asian century.

### ► Talking with the Taliban?

ASHLEY TELLIS, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace warns that negotiating with the Taliban who are convinced that military

victory is within sight was the worst possible approach to stabilising Afghanistan and that US impatience and a desire for an early exit could motivate insurgents to maintain a hard line and outlast the international coalition.

In a Carnegie report ("Reconciling with the Taliban: Towards an alternate grand strategy in Afghanistan"), he favours a long-term approach including a commitment to build an effective Afghan state and that would ensure victory and achieve US national security objectives.

He points out that the Afghan public overwhelmingly opposes the Taliban and desperately seeks success from Western military forces. He declares that American goals in Afghanistan could be achieved even without Pakistani co-operation on counter-terrorism. He states that the 'Af-Pak' strategy of the Obama administration was courageous, and responsible, a step in the right direction although incomplete. He concludes that for lasting peace in Afghanistan, a politico-military victory through effective counter-insurgency was a prerequisite.

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Photo: Edwin Lee



## CHINA

## Cracks in the party-army unity?

*The gap between the CCP and PLA appears to be widening*

D S RAJAN

IT IS not surprising that the open call given by a top Chinese military leader in 'Qiu Shi', the theoretical organ of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), on April 1st 2009 for "upholding the absolute leadership of the CCP over the army", for "making the party flag as army flag at all times" and for "the army listening to the commands of the party, Central Military Commission (CMC) and President Hu Jintao at all times", received international attention. The leader, General Li Jinai, a CMC member and head of the General Political Department (GPD) of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), while giving the call, also admitted that 'mistaken backward things' like 'depoliticisation' of the Army (*feizhengzhihua*), party-army separation (*feidanghua*) and 'nationalisation' of the army (*guojiahua*) have come to influence the armed forces, to which he demanded 'resolute' opposition.

*Prima facie*, the remarks meant an acknowledgement from the CCP that internal differences on the subject persist; their implications need a

careful study considering the importance of party-army equation for the country's politics and governance.

A deeper look would reveal that divergences within the CCP on 'absolute leadership of the party over the army' are not new. They had originated in the pre-revolution days and prevail in the post-liberation period also, and are essentially responses to the situation prevailing at each stage. Proceeding chronologically, it is worth noting the rift in late 1930s, as chronicled by the party historians, between two top leaders—Mao Zedong and Zhang Guodao—due to the latter's alleged ideas in favour of separating army from party. It finally led to Zhang's exit from the CCP.

Coming to modern era, during the 'anti-rightist' campaign of late 1950s, there were allegations of 'monolithic military thoughts' prevailing in the party with some even preferring 'liquidation of party committees in the military'. In the 1980s and early 1990s, there were reports on support to a 'nationalised' army, coming from advis-

ers to the then Premier Zhao Ziyang as well as some leading organs. More evidence suggesting a test for the CCP in enforcing its control over the army was seen: lack of enthusiasm on the part of some PLA men in the matter of dealing with 1989 Tiananmen student protests; the closure of the PLA-led enterprises in 1998 following the then Premier Zhu Rongji's dissatisfaction over the army's smuggling activities; and observations of Qiao Shi, the then Chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee that state president and CMC chief Jiang Zemin should be answerable to the parliament.

Ever since Hu Jintao took over as Chairman of the CMC in 2004, an active propaganda phase to emphasise party's control over the army is being seen. 'Hostile forces', trying to 'Westernise', 'divide' and 'depoliticise' the army, have become the main target. Their attempts are being seen as an 'important component' of carrying out a 'peaceful evolution' in China. Blame is also being levelled

dependence on the army. Both Mao and Deng had to rely on the army at crucial times to bring back normalcy in the country—Mao in the aftermath of Cultural Revolution and Deng in the case of the 1989 Tiananmen student protests.

Mr Hu faces same compulsions, experienced by Mao and Deng. He needs the army support under the officially described "new conditions and complicated changes in national defence and military building" and "multiple security threats and diverse military tasks". In other words, a party-controlled military would be crucial to Mr Hu in providing guarantee to the country's stability, which he described as an 'overriding task' in a speech in December 2008. Factors that could affect stability and lead to social unrest would include the impact of global financial crisis on China, increasing unemployment as a result of migration of rural workers from cities and fewer opportunities for young graduates passing out of universities.

The army's backing would also be important for Mr Hu in dealing with separatist tendencies in Tibet and Xinjiang. Also, with military firmly under his grip, Mr Hu may feel confident in fighting pro-democracy movements like "Charter 2008" group which, among others, has demanded party-army separation. However, Mr Hu's status as only a member of China's collective leadership without being a 'core', in contrast to the supreme positions enjoyed by his predecessors, would imply reduced elbowroom for him in keeping the PLA fully under his grip.

Indiscipline and trends towards taking action independently in the PLA without consulting the party or civil administration may also be pushing Mr Hu to keep the army under the party control. The authorities are looking upon instances of 'slack management' in the army and protests from demobilised soldiers with concern. The party may also have reasons to be unhappy over the military's failure occasionally to keep the CCP and government fully informed about its actions, for instance, during the 2001 China-US crisis over the mid-air collision between their aircraft over Hainan island and the 2007 anti-satellite weapon test by China.

A doubt arises whether or not the renewed emphasis of Hu regime on the necessity for the army to obey the party, has something to do with factional struggle within the party. An authoritative argument has given a subtle warning against emergence of leaders like Zhang Guodao who were 'right opportunists' and had supported army 'nationalisation'. It has called for remembering such events in party history. It has in addition cautioned the CCP against repeating the mistake

## **The more the CCP perceives potential dangers to its rule, more its dependence on the PLA. Both Mao and Deng had to rely on the army at crucial times to bring back normalcy in the country—Mao in the aftermath of Cultural Revolution and Deng in the case of the 1989 Tiananmen student protests.**

against 'some factions' in China for their support to an army under the state control. Since 2005, all important occasions like PLA founding anniversaries and organs like 'Qiu Shi', are being used regularly to stress the need for party's control over the army. Getting highlighted in this regard are Mr Hu's statement that the PLA should 'obey party and CMC command at any time and under any circumstances' and his 'concern over the army's stability.'

The question arises as to why the theme of "party's absolute control over the army" is being repeated again and again in China? It can be said that the CCP always considers its control over the army, as the principal means to perpetuate its superiority and protect the one-party system in the country. It is officially stated that the principle of "CCP's leading the State as the ruling party got evolved historically and also, is the requirement of current national conditions". In simple language, this would mean that the more the party perceives potential dangers to its rule, more its

committed by former USSR leading to its collapse, by the way of delinking the Soviet Army from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The remarks need a close scrutiny for their hidden meaning, if any.

Lastly, Mr Hu's underscoring the need for the PLA to obey the party command may also need to be viewed in the context of ongoing moves in China to bring his military writings on par with those of his predecessors—Mao, Deng and Jiang. The incorporation of his "Scientific Outlook on Development" theory in the party constitution has been politically important. In military terms, the exhortation to the PLA now to follow Mr Hu's military line based on "Three Provides and One Role" principle alongside the military thoughts of the three mentioned above, appear significant.

The PLA is fast becoming a professional and apolitical army, with entry into it of qualified persons in engineering and science and technology. Its cyber warfare and space units are being strengthened with specialists. Politicians have less presence in the PLA and the level of military rep-

resentation in top-level party units has come down considerably. For instance, there is no PLA member in the nine-member Politburo Standing Committee. Gone are the Long March days, when the military dominated the high political posts. There is also presently a large turnover in the PLA representation in the party gatherings, apparently as part of efforts to prevent emergence of strong military leaders capable of challenging the political leadership at some stage. The old system of having both 'red and expert' cadres in the party, army and state, seems to be fast giving way to one disconnecting the two.

In sum, the gap between the party and army appears to be increasing day by day in practice. The question in the coming years is whether or not a 'state army' will emerge, replacing the present 'party army' model.

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## CHINA

# Unhappy China, and why it cause for unhappiness

*On a controversial new book on realism and nationalism*

DAVID BANDURSKI/CHINA MEDIA PROJECT

*UNHAPPY CHINA*, a now best-selling book by several Chinese academics arguing in Darwinian terms that China should carve out for itself a pre-eminent role in world affairs, has been the focus of much coverage outside China, and of fierce debate within China.

Some Chinese scholars and journalists have expressed concern about Unhappy China's pugnacious and even jingoistic tone. The following are two responses to the book. The first is an editorial by Nanjing professor Jing Kaixuan, which appeared in a recent issue of *Southern Metropolis Daily*. The second is an interview with Shanghai scholar Xiao Gongqin, part of coverage of the book by Shanghai's *Xinmin Weekly*.

Jing Kaixuan begins his critique of *Unhappy China* against a backdrop of the myriad domestic issues with which China must contend—a not-so-subtle suggestion that China has plenty of its own concerns, and does not need to strike a confronta-

tional tone internationally. He also invokes Hu Jintao's term "boat-rocking," or *zhe teng*, suggesting the path marked by the book's authors is a dangerous loss of focus on the essentials.

### **Unhappy China is all for show—Jing Kaixuan**

WHEN I first heard about the book *Unhappy China*, I thought it was probably about how laid-off workers were unhappy, or about how peasants who had lost their land were unhappy. Maybe it was about how college graduates searching for work were unhappy, about how stock market investors were unhappy, or about how victims of the poisonous milk powder scandal were unhappy. [This would make sense], because the actual expression of such unhappiness is a mark of the progress China has made. Instead, the book's authors cast their sights much farther afield for the source of China's unhappiness. They talk about the collective anger of Chinese toward





Photo: Rickz

Western nations, and say that Chinese anger demands the emergence of a group of heroes to “lead our people to successfully control and use more resources, ridding [the world of] of bullies and bringing peace to good people.”

No sooner do we drop our guard than we find others speaking once again on our behalf. But I wonder, if this is really about an invasion by foreign enemies, whether we shouldn't be furious rather than merely “unhappy.” Relationships between nations are not like romantic relationships, which might demand a bit of petulance and coquettishness. If this [issue the authors are talking about] indeed amounts to an international dispute, it should be a matter for diplomatic negotiation to mutual benefit, not something handled with this sort of bluffing and spitting nationalism. When I read an interview with the authors at *Sina.com*, I found that the whole thing surged with naked Darwinism. The world works by the laws of the jungle, and if Western nations are insolently hegemonic, well then, we should behave like that too. China, therefore, must define its major objective as “first, to get rid of the bullies and bring peace to good people and, second, to control more resources than China currently has in order to bring blessings to all the people of the world.” Even Hitler's old slogan about “using the swords of Germany to gain lands for the ploughs of Germany” was dragged out and given a new face with the Chinese term “conducting business with a sword in hand”.

Other than these [sentiments], I detect no other basic concepts in the authors' work . . . In the words of one of the authors, an author of *China Can Say No*, Song Qiang: “Saying ‘no’ expresses the idea that ‘China just wants to govern itself,’ while ‘unhappiness’ expresses the idea that ‘China is able to lead the world.’” If you want to rule this world, though, you must first suppose

**The world works by the laws of the jungle, and if Western nations are insolently hegemonic, China, therefore, must define its major objective as “first, to get rid of the bullies and bring peace to good people and, second, to control more resources than China currently has in order to bring blessings to all the people of the world.”**

China already possesses both super powers and lofty ambitions in a number of [strategic] areas. Clearly, the “unhappy” authors don't see things this way—they believe China can already lead the world, and they object to the idea of “soft power.” The net result is that they ring empty when they talk about China's internal affairs, and they come off as falsely proud when they talk about foreign affairs. Moreover, realising their ultimate goal of overthrowing the global capitalist structure would mean not just a “qualified break” with the West, but could only be accomplished through [what they call] the “liberation of the whole world.”

These authors hail from neither the left nor the right. Rather, they are modern proponents of realism . . . thinking about problems only from the standpoint of “power,” hoping that some day the politicians will offer their good graces. In the pre-Qin dynasty times, there was a school called the “political strategists”, and unlike the Confucians and Maoists, they subscribed to no clear value concepts. They spent all of their time stumping for this or that cause, using their tongues as weapons, manoeuvring about, always changing sides, empty of knowledge but full of tactics. But the political strategists were at least able to size up the situation and to come up with positions to argue . . . In this way, they were quite unlike our “unhappy” authors, who disregard all facts and all logic and sink into their own fantasies, saying what they please without presenting an argument, subjecting themselves to fits of conspiracy theory, and remaining all the time entirely amused by their own boat-rocking (“zhe teng”) . . .

I hear that the book is selling well, and that it has caught the attention of the Western media—perhaps this is what they mean by a “qualified break.” Generally, I don't like to speculate about others' motivations in writing this or that book, as this is something you can never be clear

about. But [Phoenix TV correspondent] Luqiu Luwei has revealed that: “On the day it was published, one of the books authors told me that this was a kind of method of (speculation), to publish a provocative book and then bandy it about. Having written this commentary up to this point, I confess I’m beginning to feel a bit thick — expostulating with such seriousness about [a book that is little more than] a circus of patriotism with its eye on the bottom line.

The following is a translation of parts of an interview by *Xinmin Weekly* with Shanghai scholar Xiao Gongqin

### **Opposing the nationalism of false pride—Xiao Gongqin**

*Xinmin Weekly*: Lately, the book *Unhappy China* has been the source of much debate. What are your thoughts?

Xiao Gongqin: Over the last few days I’ve gone online and checked out pages dealing with *Unhappy China*, and in the last few weeks the number of pages dealing with it have surpassed two million, so clearly this book has had a substantial social impact. There is no question that what the authors of this book are promoting is a high-pitched, vainly arrogant and radical form of nationalism. One of the book’s authors, Wang Xiaodong, has been a friend of mine for many years, and many of the liberal intellectuals singled out for criticism in the book are also friends. China’s intellectual culture has, it seems, already entered a period of diversity, and although I do not agree with many of the views expressed in *Unhappy China*, as one among many voices in this developing culture, its existence, and its dialogue with differing viewpoints, can at least serve to catalyse a clash of ideas.

What is most terrible, for any society or any people, is homogeneity of thought. The balancing and clashing of varying voices, whether liberalism or nationalism, cultural protectionism, *et cetera*, can only have a positive outcome for the enriching of our people’s capacity for thought. People holding different views should have an attitude of tolerance.

The publication of this book has created ripples, and there are many reasons why it has had such an influence, including its jarring title and its clever commercial strategy or “build up.” But one reason is certain, and that is because it seeks to answer the question of modern China’s relationship with other peoples of the world.

This question tugs at people’s hearts because 30 years of reform have made the Chinese people

stronger, and so after a century of shame Chinese people face the question of how to re-define ourselves.

XW: One of the book’s authors, Song Qiang, has said that he prefers the term “new patriotism” to describe the popular sentiment of nationalism [today]. What are your thoughts?

Xiao Gongqin: I’ve long held the view, even before this book came out, that China’s nationalism was marked by a reactive quality, that it was goaded by a sense of tragedy and shame over the Chinese experience in the last century. This form of reactive nationalism could be stirred up, and so if these stimuli from the outside world vanished, this sort of nationalism would fade as well. Look, for example, at the May 8, 1999, incident [in which the United States bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade], and the 2001 collision of a Chinese fighter jet and an American spy plane. Both could be seen as examples of this reactive form of nationalism.

Nevertheless, the form of nationalism represented in this book can no longer be defined in these original terms. Overall speaking, the atti-

**Wang Xiaodong believes that, “any species, if it is not challenged by its external environment, will certainly degenerate.” He might be actually suggesting that in order for our people to grow strong, China must, lacking “selective pressures,” go and search for “selective pressures.”**

tude of Western countries toward China is warmer now than it has been in the past, particularly in the midst of the economic crisis, as the West has looked to China...hoping for friendly cooperation, and peaceful development has already become a general consensus among nations. Under this situation, the nationalism as represented by *Unhappy China*, which persists in striking this menacing tone, cannot be characterised as reactive. I believe that for some time to come this nationalist wave as epitomised by *Unhappy China* will continue to exist, and foreigners will have to learn to come to terms with this non-reactive form of Chinese nationalism.

What is the character of this new nationalism? Its crucial point is the positing by necessity of an “external enemy,” and this is seen by the authors as a basic condition of China’s existence

and development. One of the authors, Wang Xiaodong holds precisely this. He believes that, “any species, if it is not challenged by its external environment, will certainly degenerate.” He finds a root for this new nationalism in social biology. He believes also that China has at present no “selective pressures,” so “everyone believes that things are fine, and that it’s OK to muddle along, and this makes degeneration unavoidable.” Particularly interesting is this line: “America too faces this problem, and so it actively goes in search of enemies.” I’m not sure, but it seems Brother Xiaodong is actually suggesting that in order for our people to grow strong, China must, lacking “selective pressures,” go and search for “selective pressures.”

I think the logic here can be summed up like this: If external pressures are the necessary condition of the development and existence of a people, if they then lack pressures, they must as a matter of course manufacture these pressures. If this is the argument, then it is both fearsome and dangerous. I really, really hope this is not what the authors mean, but what of the “angry youth” who are more radical than they are? They can certainly seize upon this logic . . . It is in this theoretical logic of nationalism that I see something frightful

and dangerous. It does not lie too far, in fact, from bullying racism and jingoism.

More than ten years ago, Xiaodong applied himself to promoting nationalism, and I don’t question his academic earnestness, but if a thinker finds himself invested in a theory fraught with danger, and this framework of thought once again drags into peril a people who have only just emerged from a century of pain and who have the opportunity to thrive, that is poor timing.

Perhaps the authors will think I’ve made my case too strongly, that this is not what they intend, that they only want to urge the Chinese people not to grow idle. But what is crucial to realize is that this form of nationalism is by its own logic a Pandora’s box that will release monsters that cannot be put back.

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## CHINA POLICY

# Dealing with the rising power next door

*Comments on two recent developments in India-China relations*

NITIN PAI

**Living with the dispute**

THIS TIME it is at the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Last month, *Financial Times* reported that China had used procedure to delay the approval of ADB's new multi-year financing plan for India. Because a small part of it, around \$60 million, is for "flood management, water supply and sanitation" in Arunachal Pradesh (read 'disputed territory of South Tibet' in Chinese). This twisted the usual knickers: some commentators pointing out that China's upstream damming of the waters of the Brahmaputra is one reason contributing to Arunachal Pradesh's need for the water management project. Thanks to the Lok Sabha elections, the politicians' knickers remain untwisted. But what should you make of it?

First, it's important to recognise that China's actions are both pro forma and theatre. It is to be expected that China will signal the existence of the territorial dispute at every opportunity. As long as the border issue is not fully and finally settled, China will hold on to its position that parts of Arunachal Pradesh are really Chinese territories illegally occupied by India. So registering a protest pro forma is part of the routine. Not protesting would have been unusual: and India would see it as a 'concession'. Just why would China concede anything just like that?

At the ADB while it postponed a board meeting that was to have approved the financing package for India, it is highly unlikely that it will go to the extent of completely sabotaging it (expect the plan to be approved at the next meeting). To wreck it would be too direct, too brazen a signal that it puts politics before economics at multilateral fora. It can't afford that at a time when the G-8 is making way for the G-20 and increasing China's clout in global economic governance.

It is unclear if China's neurotic reaction to the word Arunachal Pradesh was due to its ADB delegation playing safe, or indeed a well-considered position approved by the higher authorities in Beijing. If it is the latter, then it stands to reason that India, and the rest of the world, must recognise—and respond—to the poli-

ticisation of multilateral institutions like the ADB.

Second, for its part, the ADB must realise that it is, in the end, a bank. And a bank that bases its lending policy on the basis on non-prudential considerations—not least with its largest and best customer—is asking for trouble. This is something that the ADB's governors must keep in mind at their future meetings.

Finally, there is the question why the Indian government needs the ADB to borrow \$3 billion for development projects? One explanation is that

**The ADB must realise that it is after all a bank. And a bank that bases its lending policy on the basis on non-prudential considerations—not least with its largest and best customer—is asking for trouble.**

borrowing comes at relatively easier terms. Fair enough: but to the extent that such terms act as crutches, weaken or rule out market discipline and crowd the private sector out, such financing is a curse in the longer term. Herein lies the tragedy—the UPA government not only frittered away five years of unprecedented opportunity, but actually crippled India's public finances. If it had not done so, India would be less reliant on multilateral loans...and better resist unfriendly actions like the one by China.

**Stop blaming China for India's lapses**

Quite often, alarm and indignation comes from a sense of entitlement. Surely, the argument goes, India's size and geographical location entitles it to a pre-eminent maritime status in the Indian Ocean, so how dare China intrude and construct a "string of pearls" around India?

To be sure, the emergence of China as a regional maritime power is the big story of our times. Over the past two decades, China has methodically developed basing arrangements (the

'string of pearls'), invested in a submarine fleet designed to counter the US Navy's aircraft carrier groups and, is now working on a surface fleet (including six aircraft carriers) whose purpose is to project power. This worries Indian strategists, because some of China's accretion of power will come at India's expense. While China certainly seeks to contain the expansion of Indian power, the object of its grand strategy is to counter the United States. And it is getting there: not by matching renminbi-for-dollar and getting into an arms race, but largely by methodically developing capabilities that exploit United States' weak points.

So at a time when China seeks to play in the same league as the superpower of the day, it is to be expected that it will try to extract advantageous positions in the Indian Ocean region at India's expense. The big scandal is not that China is securing bases in India's neighbourhood by shoring up nasty regimes and abetting their outrageous policies; but rather, India does not even show any sign of doing what is necessary to protect its interests.

So Home Minister P Chidambaram criticised China for fishing in troubled waters by backing the Sri Lankan government to the hilt in its war against the LTTE. So what else does Mr Chidambaram expect it to do? If the UPA government couldn't find the resolve to shape a bold Sri Lanka policy that would promote India's interests, why should he hold it against China for doing so? Similarly, if the UPA government found itself immobilised over its Nepal policy, why should China be blamed for promoting what it sees as its own interests? Surely, the likes of Pranab Mukherjee and A K Anthony didn't think that China should be held to the statements they made about there being enough space in Asia for two powers to rise simultaneously? (Even as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Mr Chidambaram did gruesome damage to the pace at which India could rise in the first place).

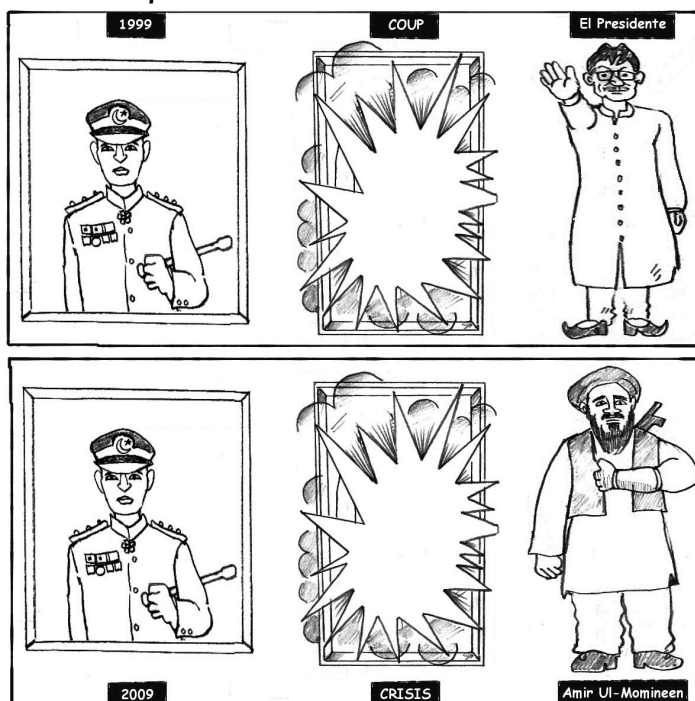
Let's face it: unless the next government—regardless of whether it is the UPA, NDA or a Ghastly Numbered Front that comes to power—firmly resolves to ensure that India's strategic frontiers are not rolled inwards, strategic containment is assured. Those who take recourse to fatalism and declare that coalition politics doesn't allow an assertive foreign policy, especially in India's neighbourhood, better not express indignation when they spot a Chinese aircraft carrier group a few hundred nautical miles from Kochi or Mumbai. Actually, coalition politics has been offered as an excuse for gross mismanagement of

neighbourhood policy—but other than during the election season, coalition partners limit their foreign policy demands largely to rhetoric. It stands to reason, therefore, that a central government that can't stand up to pressure from its coalition partners can't stand up to pressure from Beijing.

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## Metamorphoses

Srikant Jakilinki



## PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

**Taliban at the gate***Pakistanis are outraged, but the military holds the key*

AHSAN BUTT

THE INCREASING concern—internationally, regionally, and nationally—directed at Pakistan's internal stability is well-founded. The threat from the Taliban and their various local surrogates is growing, not abating, and there seems to be little that state institutions can do about it. These concerns raise important questions. How did Pakistan get here? Why has it been unable to stem Taliban advancement in "settled" territory? And, most importantly, what is required for Pakistan to escape this existential crisis?

There have been three basic components of the growing Taliban problem: the political, the military, and the geopolitical.

The political problem has centred on a lack of willingness of Pakistan's political elite, as well as wide swathes of the public, to clearly and unequivocally identify the Taliban as a force to be opposed. This is for a number of reasons. First, the rampant anti-Americanism that runs through the country has made it easy for the Taliban to be conceived of as the lesser of two evils—the enemy of my enemy, if you will. Second, given the failure of Pakistan's traditional governing structures to actually deal with the problems of the average Pakistani, there has been a growing sympathy to the idea of "Islamic democracy", whereby the state is run on religious principles, if not religious laws per se. Since everything else has failed, the logic goes, why not give this a try? By this logic, what is truly problematic for many Pakistanis are the methods, and not the overarching goals, of the Taliban. Third, the Taliban are often looked upon as the "second-movers" in this war, whereby they merely responded to the aggression showed by the United States in Afghanistan and by former President Pervez Musharraf in Waziristan. Notwithstanding the empirical questionability of each of these claims, they make for a firm foundation of countenancing the Taliban, if not outrightly supporting them.

The military problem is rooted in the fact that Pakistan's armed forces are not terribly well-equipped to fighting wars, especially counter-insurgency wars against a primarily Pashtun en-



Image: Al Jazeera

emy. Pakistan's military has lost every war it has launched or, at the very least, it has not won any of them. More to the point, the military is not trained to fight counterinsurgency wars on its own soil. On the contrary, it is trained to fight the Indian military across the plains of Punjab. Finally, given that the Pashtuns are the second-largest contingent in terms of ethnicity in the Pakistan military—their membership in the armed forces easily outpaces their share of the total population—the questions of morale and willingness amongst the troops are serious ones, keeping in mind that the Taliban is primarily a Pashtun movement. More generally, militaries which have been excessively involved in a country's politics are sometimes unable to perform their primary role due to their adopted power positions; the erosion of Argentina's military in the 1970s and 1980s is a good example.

Finally, the geopolitical problem centres on two key actors: the United States and India. With respect to the U.S., the Pakistani military establishment functions on the assumption that the Americans will leave the region, that they will do so inevitably, and that they will do so soon. This assumption is born out of the partnership in the 1980s against the Soviets in Afghanistan, when at the conclusion of the conflict, the U.S. left Pakistan



all alone in dealing with a porous border with Afghanistan, not to mention legions of armed and unemployed fighters who were convinced they were waging war on Allah's behalf. American history in the region, then, guides the belief that their stay this time will be brief too.

What this expectation of an American exit does is ensure that the entire military establishment in Pakistan may not wholeheartedly be behind the conflict against all elements of the Taliban, even if orders from above argue against such thinking. Why fight them today when they could come in handy tomorrow, once the Americans have left? This strategic rationale is exacerbated by the perception of encirclement driven by India's close relationship to the Karzai government, and the growing strategic partnership between the two in the region.

Finally, America's actions themselves—whether they be the drone attacks brought upon by the Bush-Musharraf partnership, and expanded considerably by the Obama-

These developments should be wholly troubling for average Pakistanis. First and foremost, they mean the prospect of local customs and leadership literally being done away with. Second, business and "usual" economic activity grinds to a halt under the Taliban; the only template we have, that of Afghanistan in the 1990s, does not hold a great deal of promise on this front. Third, women can expect to be subjected to even greater violations of basic human rights than they currently are deprived of in Pakistan. Fourth, all social and cultural freedoms, such as those of speech, art, religion, will be a thing of the past. The well-circulated video of a teenage girl being flogged in public – for a crime that only a member of the Taliban would be able to explain – is a fair harbinger of what the rest of Pakistan should expect under Taliban rule. Unfortunately, such assessments are generally reached only when the Taliban actually move into one's neighbourhood. Until the manifestation of a direct threat, it seems, Pakistanis have been largely content to look the other way.

Until now. In response to the trend of increasing Taliban influence, there are small but substantive encouraging signs that Pakistan and its public may finally be waking up to the threat. Coverage in the local media has lately been almost exclusively focused on the Taliban's bold ventures into Pakistan's territory, and their challenge to the writ of the state. Important figures, such as Fazlur Rehman, the leader of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islami (JUI-F), a religious party with a historical foothold in the areas currently overrun by the Taliban, and Nawaz Sharif, the country's most popular politician, a centre-right figure who has hitherto shown little inclination to speak against the Taliban, have begun to publicly speak of the dangers that Pakistan faces. Both General Kayani and the Prime Minister have warned that the Taliban will not be allowed to indefinitely challenge the state.

More importantly, the tide of public opinion may finally be turning, from equivocation to outrage. The first salvo in the public opinion wars may well have been the attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricketers in March. Cricket was and is the one thing that unites this deeply divided country, and the Sri Lankans were the only international team that braved to tour amidst the spectre of security threats. Their targeting was an affront to all Pakistanis. The infamous girl-being-flogged followed soon after, which was in turn followed by greater Taliban incursions in Pakistani territory. And one has not even mentioned the as-yet unyielding campaign of violence against Pakistani civilians and security forces. Given these events in

**The tide of public opinion may finally be turning against the Taliban, from equivocation to outrage. The first salvo in the public opinion wars may well have been the attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricketers in March.**

Zardari pairing, or the promise of an even greater ground force by Obama in neighbouring Afghanistan -- are effectively pushing the Taliban east, closer and closer to the heart of Pakistan.

These factors in conjunction have meant that the Taliban, far from being on the run, are spreading their tentacles further and further into the settled areas of Pakistan. Having moved in to Swat at the end of last year, and easily winning control of the picturesque valley, they have now spread into neighbouring districts. The Taliban now effectively administer important areas within one hundred miles of Islamabad, the federal capital. They have made inroads into Punjab, the country's most populous and politically important province. And they are treading water in Karachi, the country's business, commercial, and financial hub, its port city, and its most (read: only) multi-ethnic city, where a substantial Pashtun population resides, which would allow them ease in remaining undetected.

the last eight weeks, it would not be surprising to find people more cognisant of the Taliban threat.

Despite these purported changes, however, the military—as always in Pakistan—holds the key. Even though the leadership of the military has been unequivocal about security policy in the country, the message appears to not have seeped down to all actors involved. This must change. Simply put, there can be no more coddling of Taliban elements for geostrategic reasons. India ceased to be a threat to Pakistan on May 28, 1998. Even if India is friendly with Afghanistan, and even if some members of Pakistan's military establishment perceive encirclement, care must be taken to carefully evaluate the real threat, or lack thereof, that India poses to Pakistan's existential security. This is not 1914, and Pakistan is not Germany. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal guarantees that India cannot overrun Pakistan, with or without an alliance with Afghanistan. The nuclear guarantee, unfortunately, does not extend to the prospect of the Taliban overrunning Pakistan. The military establishment must decide which eventuality is more likely.

Of course, this still ignores the very real possibility that even if Pakistan's military is willing to tackle the Taliban, it is not able to. This may well be the scariest possibility of all. Those who have long warned about the dangers of the Taliban and the ostrich-like attitude of the media and the general public – such as this writer – have generally directed their ire at those elements that constrain the military by not providing political cover for the war. Such a position is correct insofar as it assumes that public opinion and the vacillating political leadership is holding the military back. But it elides the possibility that the military simply cannot do the job. Recall that from 2004 to 2006, the military under Musharraf went into Waziristan and came out with its tail between its legs, having lost more than a thousand soldiers without winning any substantial political concessions. What makes us so sure that Swat, Malakand, and – if it comes to it – Punjab will be so different?

Whether the answer to that question is as troubling as it could be is something we must discover for ourselves. Pakistanis of all stripes -- from the media to the public, from the political leadership to the military -- must unite in the face of this threat. It is time for action, not words. Though no

options, whether they be military, diplomatic, or economic, should ever be taken off the table in a war, it is clear that concessions and negotiations do not work the Taliban. They are not reliable partners, and they have made a habit of renegeing on every single agreement they have made with the government, whether it be Musharraf's or Zardari's. Pakistan's security apparatus must make place for greater (and smarter) force at this juncture, and Pakistan's government must ensure that the damage to innocents is minimized as those actions are taken – including safe passage for locals, and temporary housing and care for internally displaced persons. Such sacrifices require unity before all else, and fortunately, the Taliban may just have done the hard job for us by overplaying their hand in recent weeks. It is now up to the institutions of the state -- the civilians in

**From 2004 to 2006, the military under General Musharraf went into Waziristan and came out with its tail between its legs, having lost more than a thousand soldiers without winning any substantial political concessions. What makes us so sure that Swat, Malakand, and—if it comes to it—Punjab will be so different?**

parliament, and the men entrusted to protect our territorial integrity -- to do their job, and save Pakistanis from this madness.

At the signing of the declaration of American independence, Benjamin Franklin told the attendees present that 'we must all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.' That advice would serve Pakistanis infinitely better than any amount of cash notes that bear Franklin's likeness. This is Pakistan's war, and it must be fought and won for and by Pakistanis. Any fudging of that fact, and any abdication of ownership of this conflict, would have consequences too dire to contemplate.

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PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

# Middle-class saviour

## *The inevitable defeat of the Taliban*

MOSHARRAF ZAIDI



Photo: Omar Ayaz

THE YOUNG lust that infuriates the fascist Flintstones of Malakand is only the beginning of the love chronicles that will extinguish the little ember that they mistake for a raging fire. That little ember is disenchantment with the state in this country. Unfortunately for these comedic miscarriages of reality there is only one raging fire in Pakistan. It is the fire of Pakistan's urban middle class. Sure there are randomly distributed fascist mullahs in the cities too, and many of them have taken the choreography of Sufi Mohammed to heart. But if it was so easy to convert the madrasahs of this country into the nodes of a bloody fascist Flintstone revolution, it would have already happened.

The real love affair that the Taliban and their ilk should be scared of is the incandescent passion with which Pakistanis, religious and irreligious, love their big, bulking behemoth of a country. March 15 may be a long and distant memory in the newspapers, but its markings on the DNA of Pakistan are still fresh. The scars that it has left are still raw, and the traditional elite in this country have not forgotten the humiliation of that day. Both the feudal politicians and the wannabe-feudal military leaders in this country grossly mis-underestimated (a Bushism all too appropriate for this Pakistan) the size and heat of the movement to restore the judiciary. The Taliban,

the TNSM and the Lal Masjid Brigades repeat the mistakes made by the traditional elite for good reason. Their DNA is imprinted with the "Made By The Traditional Elite of Pakistan" label. It is seductive to be blinded by ideological opportunism, paralysed by romance for family dynasties or constrained by linguistic or ethnic politics. But such seduction should not alter a clear reading of how Pakistan got to where it is. Irrational public discourse under the cloak of religion in Pakistan did not appear from the sky. It has been carefully cultivated by the traditional elite of Pakistan—military and political both.

Controlling the mosques with their left hands, and the triggers of civilian and military guns with their right—the traditional elites' kneeling before the Swat Flintstones should not be such a shocker. The demands for the Nizam-e-Adl regulation met with nary a whimper of resistance from these elite, because they would much rather continue milking the people, rather than delivering real change. If ceding some space to the faux wrath of a perverted distributive justice agenda is the way to get the immediate problem off its back, so be it. It is a lot easier than to actually respond to the increasingly urgent calls for reform and renewal in Pakistan's increasingly globalised cities.

The MQM, for all its deep rooted failures and tortuous history, understands the urban agenda better than any political party in the country. Its DNA, despite its ethnic roots, has been forged in Karachi, a dingy, dirty, unmanageable and glorious city of more than 16 million. Despite the clear and obvious threats that a free judiciary poses to the MQM, the party chose not to allow another May 12 to transpire this March, as the lawyers made their final push for the restoration of the Chief Justice. They did this because they understood that the lawyers movement itself, was a deeply urban phenomenon.

Its urban character is also why the MQM has spoken loudly and proudly against the ridiculous handing over of Pakistani sovereignty to the TNSM. Best of all, MQM's depth of relationship with urban sentiment is evident in the starkly dif-



ferent rhetoric that it chooses in engaging with the issues, as compared to Pakistan's Gucci and Prada liberals. By convening a conference of religious scholars to essentially blacken and stain the deal with the TNSM, the MQM did not bow to fundamentalists. It simply embraced the Muslim realities of Pakistan's middle class, without ceding that reality to a bunch of deeply delusional mullahs.

Of course, no self-respecting secular, progressive Pakistani liberal would be caught dead at such a convention. And that's the whole point about the difference between legitimate and mainstream politics, and the kind of cheese and cracker liberals that want to bury religion altogether in South Asia. Good luck. The MQM gets cities, its inhabitants, and gets their inextricable link to faith and is therefore a serious power player in this country. The liberals are a loud but politically sterile mini-minority. As much as the lawyers' movement was an a-religious movement, it was not amoral. Most Pakistanis, including the English-speaking, Priyanka-gawking, bank-employed and city-dwelling, still draw their primary moral inspiration from Islam.

Drawing inspiration from a work of art, and being able to identify the key messages of the piece of course, are two different things. Since handing over the mosque to the least equipped demographic in Muslim South Asia at Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's request, the "ashrafs" of Hind-o-Pak-o-Bangla have essentially abdicated their faith to a rudderless clergy. The engine that sustains this clergy's ownership of the mosque and madrassah, is a mutually reinforcing and supremely confident ignorance of Islam. The clergy keeps preaching whatever self-fulfilling ignorant hatred that will make it relevant and keep it current. Meanwhile, keenly aware of his or her own ignorance, the "ashraf" will keep running further and further from the mosque, calling anyone who doesn't sign-up for New Age Sufism on the back of guitars and hashish, a backward mullah.

The results of this car wreck of the Momineen are manifest from Kabul to Dhaka. But it is politically radioactive material. No one wants to touch it. India and Bangladesh can continue to get away with the twisted and mangled Islam that is South Asia's legacy, maybe. But the endorsement of this equation by international and national organisations that were looking to win a Cold War in Afghanistan and Pakistan have now borne some very poisonous fruit.

The detoxification of Islam in Pakistan—and that is where the challenge is now most urgent—is not going to happen because drunken Facebook

status updates say it should. Taking the fight to the clergy and its agents of irrationality and intolerance with music, dance and poetry is self-defeating. The language of Muslim religious discourse is not punctuated by raagas. Unsurprisingly, it drips with Islamic symbolism. Modern Pakistan needs to stop being to be shy of engaging the clergy with those same symbols. Indeed, it is the uncontested monopolisation of those symbols that has enabled the current rot. When up against a rational discourse that takes pains to respect, rather than reject some basic elements of faith, more often than not the mullahs will lose the argument. Ignorance has a very short shelf life, especially in the face of knowledge, and moral clarity.

Simply put, there are more Hakim Saids (the Hamdard family patriarch) in Pakistan's Muslim history than there are Sufi Mohammads. That fact is inescapable, and its implications are irresistible. Fought properly, there is only one outcome in the battle for the soul of Pakistan—victory for the peace-loving masses, and defeat for the firestorm-fanning agents of irrationality.

**Modern Pakistan needs to stop being to be shy of engaging the clergy with Islamic symbolism. Indeed, it is the uncontested monopolisation of those symbols that has enabled the current rot.**

Of course, the MQM represents a deeply compromised flag-bearer for the political fight against the Taliban. Despite a much-reformed party agenda, the ethnic affiliation of its top leadership is an issue that has consistently kept it from growing beyond urban Sindh. Moreover, rather ironically, its political choices since 1999 have put it directly at odds with urban Punjab. Ultimately, however, the alliance between urban Sindh and urban Punjab is a natural and inevitable one. This inevitability was all too visible to President Asif Ali Zardari, and it is what inspired the unnatural alliance between the PPP and the MQM—two parties that were at opposite ends of the violence and mayhem of May 12. Despite the federalist benefits of the PPP-MQM alliance, and the dangers of a rural Sindh that has no allies in either the Punjab or in Karachi, this political expedience is not a sustainable arrangement in the long run.

Of course, the challenge in the Punjab is the PML (N)'s ability to continue to be a vessel for the articulation of urban Pakistan's political ethos. Taking on the mullah without abdicating its cen-

trist Muslim identity is a critical challenge for the PML (N). Traditionally, it has been assumed that the natural role of taking on the mullah belongs to the PPP. Today's PPP, lacking the brilliance of a Bhutto as its field marshal, is hurting. It is unable to seamlessly integrate the feudal tendencies of its electoral strength with the urbane (not urban) sensibilities of its somewhat exceptional cadre of highly qualified advisors. The growing wisdom and alacrity of the Prime Minister notwithstanding, the PPP will take at least a generation to grow into a viable force in Pakistan's new urban frontier. Until then, compromise with the most unpalatable negotiating-table partners is all the party can do, to stay alive. This is doubly true for the ANP, which has been unfairly burdened with the blame for the Swat deal. In fact, the ANP has done what every party other than the MQM would do

elections. Despite the bread and butter nature of these issues in urban and rural Pakistan, the religious right failed to win back the gifts handed to it by the deeply flawed elections of 2002. The key question is not whether the religious right in Pakistan can mobilise meaningful numbers to actualise its vision for a strait-jacketed and irrational Pakistan. They cannot. Even though these issues are shared across a broad spectrum, the religious right is tone-deaf, and politically irrelevant. And if the JUI and JI and their cohorts can't win the street, the Taliban don't have a chance.

The key question therefore is not about the populism of the Taliban, the TNSM, or any violent extremists in Pakistan. It is whether Pakistani Muslims will remain hostage to their sense of religious inferiority to the mullah. In fear of violating the precepts of a faith to which most Pakistanis are still deeply committed, will the people give mullahs like Abdul Aziz of Lal Masjid carte blanche to destroy this country? The MQM's ulema conference may cause all kinds of squirming, but it answers the question unequivocally. No they will not.

The biggest roadblock between the Taliban and the rest of the world is Pakistan's middle class. Its investment in a discourse around the faith that it adheres to, and its urgent and uncompromising appetite for structural reform of the Pakistani state are inevitable. And it is the inevitability of the Pakistani middle class's engagement with serious issues in Pakistan that ultimately will be the firewall that will hold. Violent extremists can flog the odd alleged straying couple, but they cannot flog 172 million Pakistanis, or the 30 million of them that are cityfolk now. The Taliban cannot win this war. That is why they're so angry all the time.

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in the same situation. Without a military that is willing to take the battlefield heat, political parties have no choice but to find compromise solutions to intractable problems.

None of the realpolitik of the day however, alters the bottomline truth about Pakistan in 2009. There is a big set of unresolved issues around which violent extremists are able to construct a rationale for their murderous campaign for power. The resonance and appeal of these issues is undeniable. The bloodshed at the Lal Masjid in 2007, the covert sexual revolution that has taken place on the back of Bollywood's ever-growing hormonal range, and a massive telecom boom, and the collateral damage of drone attacks all have serious play in mainstream Pakistan.

But these issues are not the sole informants of Pakistani—*to use Adil Najam's phraseology*. They are among a larger galaxy of issues. Proof of this is in the political performance of the right-wing, even as recently as the February 18, 2008

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## BALUCHISTAN

# Waiting for true federation

*Baluch nationalism is not entirely incongruent with the idea of Pakistan*

UMAIR AHMED MUHAJIR

IT HAS been apparent for some time now (at least since the killing of Baluch leader Nawab Aftab Ahmed Bugti in August 2006 by the Pakistani army) that Baluchistan might well end up as Pakistan's biggest challenge. Not in terms of security, narrowly-defined, but in terms of the challenge it poses to the idea of Pakistan, and to the democratic aspirations of that country's people. What should be no less apparent are the implications of the troubles in Baluchistan for both India and the United States, and the region as a whole.

Most Pakistanis are too young to remember—or too remote from—the mass killings and rapes of Bengalis (by the Pakistani army, though also by other Bengalis, most notably the Jamaat-e-Islami) in 1971. Pakistanis have hitherto tended to approach issues of secession primarily through the prism of Kashmir, and the challenge that state's secessionist movement poses to Indian democracy and the claims of its national ideology. But Baluchistan underscores many of the same issues (although the movement in Baluchistan, animated as it appears to be by concerns with resource exploitation by “outsiders,” and cultural alienation from the mainstream, is more analogous to some of India's North-Eastern insurgencies than to Kashmir), but has not gotten the attention it deserves. This is true within Pakistan, in part due to the tendency of the urban Pakistani middle classes to lump together all the tribals “out there” as savages who only understand the language of force. On this view, tribals are people who may only be engaged anthropologically as it were—and this is so whether one extols them as natural warriors, or dismisses them as incapable of being anything other than what the stereotype of the hot-headed, “backward” subject of a traditional tribal code condemns them to be. There is thus not much need to draw distinctions between “tribals,” to differentiate the Baluch from the far more numerous and politically significant Pashtuns.

Internationally too, the tendency is to ignore Baluchistan in favour of its neighbouring Pashtun-areas. The inclination is to view the province as



Photo: Baluch Voice

little more than the borderland between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. It is a view that acknowledges the province's strategic importance, but does not engage with the political aspirations of those for whom it is home.

Indeed, the U.S. government's new “AfPak” policy might continue this trend: Baluchistan only seems to figure in that policy inasmuch as parts of it have become a staging ground for Taliban factions, and are hence the likely targets of future US drone attacks. That is a perfectly consistent position to take: after all, it makes little sense for American strategy to turn on Pakistan's internal administrative divisions. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to view Baluchistan only through the prism of the Taliban and Afghanistan: the province is Pakistan's largest in terms of area, and is the source of most of the country's natural gas. Moreover, it has been progressively destabilised by the influx of Pashtuns over the last thirty years (since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), as the “native” Baluch have become increasingly anxious in the face of the province's changing demographics. If the likes of Mullah Omar and the (essentially Pashtun) Taliban are indeed in Baluchistan, their presence there must be seen in the context of this wider shift in the province's dynamics.



Even apart from any Baloch-Pashtun tension, the province is no stranger to secessionist tendencies: it was the scene of a protracted insurgency against the central government in the 1970s, a rebellion that was crushed with brutality. But over the ensuing three decades, Pakistan has not addressed the underlying causes of Balochistan's disaffection. This is entirely consistent with the wider problem of federalism—or the lack thereof—in the country: political parties in each of the country's smaller provinces (in practice, every province other than Punjab, which accounts for three-fifths of the population) have called for a more robust federalism over the years, to little effect. Indeed, while the world tends to analyse Pakistan's repeated military coups only in terms of a deficit in electoral politics, military intervention may also be seen as symptomatic of the centralising drive of the state, one that compromises democracy not just by suspending the electoral process, but by vitiating federalism.

The interplay of democracy and federalism is of crucial importance, never more so than in a multi-ethnic polity, and a comparison of Pakistan with India on that front is illuminating. Arguably, nothing de-fanged the secessionist tendencies of the Tamil "Dravidian" movements in South India more than regional electoral success for the relevant parties. More generally, the many failings of Indian federalism have accidentally found some provisional relief over the last two decades: the decline of national political parties has led to a de facto federalism premised on the ability of regional parties to serve as kingmakers as far as the formation of a ruling national coalition is concerned. By contrast, the absence of meaningful federalism in Pakistan has meant that the "problem" of Balochistan has continued to fester over the 1980s and 1990s, albeit out of sight and out of mind.

No longer: during the Pakistani state's most recent bout of highly centralised rule—the dictatorship of Pervez Musharraf—another armed insurgency broke out in Balochistan. It appears to be gaining strength, and in April, the province's capital Quetta saw riots after three Baloch nationalist figures were murdered (by, it is widely believed, state security forces). The Obama administration would be well-advised to pay attention to these developments—which have little to do with the Taliban. That is, while the "AfPak" strategy does well to take a regional approach to the problem of the Taliban and Al-Qaida, it must also account for sub-regional aspects, few of which are more significant than those concerning Baloch nationalism. A single-minded focus on the Taliban's presence

in Balochistan, to the exclusion of other considerations, would almost certainly entail an even greater Pakistani military presence in Balochistan. Such an approach can only contribute to the anti-military resentment of the Baloch, further undermining stability in the province, and in turn leading to an even better haven for the likes of the Taliban.

The situation in Balochistan has obvious implications for India as well, although it is unclear what India's position is on the Baloch issue. As has been apparent for some years now, an unstable Pakistan poses a significant threat to India, for at least three reasons. First, fragmentation of the subcontinent's second-largest country can spur other secessionist movements in the region. Second, a Balochistan in flux, playing host to numerous Islamic extremists, can increase the flow of arms and ideologically-motivated cadres in the region. It is easily foreseeable that such groups' plans might well include India, whether for ideological or tactical reasons. Indeed, the 2001 parliament attack, and the 2008 Mumbai assault, might well be evidence of just such tactical sophistication, intended to heighten tensions between India and Pakistan and relieve pressure on militants in Pakistan's western regions by forcing diversion of military resources to Pakistan's eastern frontier. Third, neither India nor any other regional player can ignore the potential impact of greater instability on a region with both nuclear weapons and weak security standards.

In the long run, the solution is obvious: Pakistan needs a looser federal structure than exists today, and one that allows Balochistan greater control over its own natural resources; the rub, of course, lies in getting there. American or Indian influence over any such process is (and ought to be) limited, but to the extent "outsiders" can play any constructive role, it would lie in encouraging an accommodating stance by the Pakistani state toward Baloch nationalists. This is not simply a question of fairness, but of realpolitik: cooptation has tended to work far better than brutal confrontation as far as the post-1947 history of the subcontinent is concerned. As yet, there is little reason to believe that Baloch nationalism is irredeemably rejectionist as far as the idea of Pakistan is concerned. Pakistan might not be so lucky if another three decades are wasted.

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Photo: David T. MacFarlane, Jr.

## REVIEW

## “It was always about oil, dear!”

*Understanding conflicts over energy resources*

T S GOPI RETHINARAJ

ONE OF the most controversial and misunderstood issues in history and contemporary affairs is the relationship between natural resources and international conflict. When Iraq under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990 it was pretty clear that the Iraqi regime invaded its tiny and helpless neighbour to control its oil wealth and bail itself out of a serious financial crisis resulting from the eight year war with Iran. The US-led military campaign six months later to oust the Iraqi forces from Kuwait was also about oil. If Kuwait had just produced dates and not oil the United States would not have come to its rescue, nor would Iraq have coveted it. Current public perception about America’s long military involvement in the Middle East also mainly revolves around oil.

Anxiety about future “resource wars” has al-

### Review

#### ***Energy and International War: From Babylon to Baghdad and Beyond***

by Clifford E Singer  
World Scientific, 452 pages, 2008

ways been a fertile ground for many writers to influence readers with different inclinations. But the relationship between natural resources and international conflict is not as simple as suggested by most writers on the subject. Clifford

Singer, a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offers a refreshing yet sober analysis of this perennial issue in *Energy and International War: From Babylon to Baghdad and Beyond*. The author guides the reader through some of the most important military conflicts during the past two centuries and provides interesting and original insights about the role of energy resources in these conflicts. After a brief examination of the social and economic conditions that led to widespread practice of slavery (viewed primarily as energy source) in different societies and the conflicts over gold, silver, and other valuable miner-

als, the book focuses primarily on the mineral energy resources—coal, oil, gas, and uranium—that played crucial roles in wars and economic growth since industrialisation.

With the advent of the industrial revolution, coal and iron ore resources acquired military and economic significance for major powers during the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. After the 1872 Franco-Prussian War, Germany occupied the iron-ore outcroppings in Alsace-Lorraine region in France. German access to additional iron-ore resources was valuable for increased steel production during the preparation for both world wars. Even though Germany's decision to occupy Alsace-Lorraine after the 1872 war was an afterthought rather than the sole motivation for the war, it left an enduring impact through much of the twentieth century in the French perception about the relationship between natural resources and international conflict. Now

and spheres of influence. Britain also had convenient access to Australian and Canadian uranium for its military and civilian nuclear programs. Until relatively recently, China's demand for uranium was solely for military use and was met by domestic production. France was an exception. The decision to embark on an ambitious military and civilian nuclear program after World War II depleted its domestic resources rather quickly. This led France to pursue neo-colonial policies in some of its former colonies like Niger and Gabon during the Cold War in order to have preferential access to uranium resources. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent demilitarisation of uranium mining operations worldwide prompted the French to abandon this policy. The book also suggests that commercial reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel—originally meant to deal with uranium supply security—will have to be abandoned or delayed until economic and political conditions become favourable.

Oil and natural gas present peculiar problems. The contours of natural gas supply and geopolitics is complex but manageable. Oil is the only mineral energy resource that continues to generate international security concerns. This is because nearly two thirds of the world's conventional oil reserves are located in a geopolitical hotspot, and a convenient alternative fuel for large scale adoption in transport is decades away. The world is still grappling with the issues surrounding oil supply security since Winston Churchill made the decision just before World War I to convert the British naval fleet from coal to oil. After that war most of the Arab Middle East fell from the Ottomans to British and French control. The importance of this transfer of control of transport fuels became obvious after Japan's attack on the Pearl Harbor and Nazi Germany's military campaigns. Lack of access to oil played a major role in hastening the military defeat of Germany and Japan during World War II. This resulted in the perception that oil is a strategic resource with military connotations although oil consumption by the world's militaries today constitutes a very small fraction of total oil consumption, according to the author. What then explains America's continued military presence in the Persian Gulf? Is it about protecting the free flow of oil from the Straits of Hormuz or containing Islamic radicalism and spreading democracy in the region? There are no simple answers to these questions, but the book provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of oil supply security and the future of international conflict over control of natural resources in general. Speculation about impend-

**“Generational lags” in history often led to distortions in the perception about the relationship between resources and conflict and resulted in major wars. We are at the cusp for internalising these historical lessons to avoid future recurrence of wars driven solely by motivation to control natural resources.**

it is almost unthinkable that coal and iron-ore resources can generate international conflict because market forces and international trade mechanisms have ensured supply security for resource-poor industrial countries since the end of World War II. But, as the author highlights, Europe paid a heavy price for a rather late realisation that access to heavy industry minerals could be assured through collective bargaining and management. What primarily started as a consortium to manage coal and iron-ore supply for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II later laid the foundation for the European Union.

The book also has an interesting discussion on uranium supply security. Uranium mining and production was highly regulated and controlled through the Cold War because of its military significance, although the civilian nuclear energy industry was the largest consumer. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had access to adequate uranium resources for their military and civilian nuclear programs within their territories



ing wars over water, energy, and other critical resources is a common theme exploited by serious scholars and pulp writers. There have been frequent suggestions that conflicts among major consumers of oil are inevitable and will lead to formation of new military alliances. Regional developments and the nature of military alliances, however, highlight the flawed nature of such assessments. But the idea of resource wars has special appeal because resource conflicts dot human history. During all the major phases of human advance—hunting-gathering to farming to industrialisation—natural resources have played crucial roles in the fortunes of tribal groups and societies. Resource conflicts also have a particularly strong resonance in developing societies that emerged from colonialism because of the prevailing perception that colonialists came with the objective of plundering natural resources.

American scholarship in international security generally suffers from an insular world-view. This book, however, breaks from the mould and has a broader appeal to an international audience. The author reveals how “generational lags” in history often led to distortions in the perception about the

relationship between resources and conflict and resulted in enormous human suffering during major wars. And those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. The human race is at the cusp for internalising these historical lessons to avoid future recurrence of wars driven solely by motivation to control natural resources. When that happens, transition to energy sustainability and supply security is relatively easier. But conflicts driven by nationalistic, religious, and ethnic fervour can create immense mental blocks to realise these obvious truths. Dr Singer's book is a significant contribution to a better understanding of the human predicament and a necessary reading for students, journalists, scholars, policy makers, and anyone seriously interested in the relationship between natural resources and international conflict.

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